

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 229072
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INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS
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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 229072

PARIS FOR UNESCO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: NESCO, IS

SUBJECT: ARCHAEOLOGICAL ACTIVITY IN JERUSALEM
SUBJ: ARCAEOLOGICAL ACTIVITY IN JERUSALEM

REF: PARIS 24705

1. DURING SEPTEMBER 5 CALL ON ASSISTANT SECRETARY MAYNES, PROFESSOR LEMAIRE EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THE ISRAELIS MAY BE PLANNING A FIVE-YEAR ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIG IN THE OPHEL SECTION OF JERUSALEM. (LEMAIRE IS AN INDEPENDENT BELGIAN EXPERT WHOM M'BOW HAS BEEN SENDING TO JERUSALEM TO INVESTIGATE ARCHAEOLOGICAL MATTERS. HE REPORTS TO M'BOW PERSONALLY. HE LAST VISITED JERUSALEM IN JULY.) ACCORDING TO PROFESSOR LEMAIRE, A GREAT AMOUNT OF RUBBLE FROM PAST ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS ELSEWHERE IN
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PAGE 02 STATE 229072

JERUSALEM HAS BEEN DUMPED OVER THE YEARS ON THE OPHEL SLOPE. THE RUBBLE IS PHYSICALLY UNSTABLE AND LAST MONTH TWO CHILDREN PLAYING ON THE SLOPE WERE BURIED ALIVE WHEN THE RUBBLE SHIFTED. TEDDY KOLLECK'S SUBSEQUENT ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE RUBBLE WOULD BE REMOVED WAS WELCOMED, SAID THE PROFESSOR, BUT A LATER REPORT IN THE JERUSALEM POST THAT REMOVAL OF THE RUBBLE WOULD ONLY BE PART OF A

FIVE-YEAR ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT (POSSIBLY WITH GOI SUPPORT) HAS CAUSED CONCERN.

2. LEMAIRE SAID REMOVAL OF THE RUBBLE WOULD PROBABLY BE VIEWED AS AN UNOBJECTIONABLE TECHNICAL NECESSITY, EVEN IF ISRAELI ARCHAEOLOGISTS USED THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMB THE RUBBLE FOR ARTIFACTS. BUT TO DIG FURTHER WOULD CERTAINLY ALTER THE PHYSICAL CHARACTER OF JERUSALEM, HE SAID, AND WOULD PROBABLY LEAD TO THE EXPROPRIATION AND/OR DESTRUCTION OF ARAB PROPERTY ON THE OPHEL SLOPE. HE FELT MANY UNESCO MEMBERS WOULD STRONGLY OBJECT. LEMAIRE SAID THAT WHEN HE REPORTED TO M'BOW, HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE HAD NOT HAD A CHANCE TO CONFIRM THE JERUSALEM POST REPORT. HE SAID THAT M'BOW ASKED HIM TO RETURN TO JERUSALEM LATER THIS MONTH TO INVESTIGATE THIS REPORT AND IF NECESSARY TO TRY TO PERSUADE THE ISRAELIS TO SUSPEND THE PROJECT.

3. THIS MATTER APPEARS ON THE AGENDA OF THE FORTHCOMING UNESCO GENERAL CONFERENCE (OCTOBER 24-NOVEMBER 28 IN PARIS).

4. DEPARTMENT WOULD APPRECIATE TEXT OF JERUSALEM POST ARTICLE TO WHICH LEMAIRE REFERRED, AS WELL AS ANY BACKGROUND INFORMATION CONGEN CAN PROVIDE ON THE OPHEL SLOPE PROBLEM. IN VIEW OF GOI UNESCO PERMREP'S
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PAGE 03 STATE 229072

REMARK (PARA 4 REFTTEL) THAT HEBREW UNIVERSITY WILL UNDERTAKE EXCAVATIONS IN KING DAVID AREA, POST SHOULD ALSO CONSIDER A GENERAL ROUNDUP ON ARCHAEOLOGICAL ACTIVITY, ESPECIALLY OFFICIALLY SUPPORTED ACTIVITY.

CHRISTOPHER

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